

NATIONAL RECYCLING WEEK – November 12-16

National Recycling Week is our opportunity to share, discuss and focus on the important environmental practices that reduce waste, save resources and ensure the proper disposal of materials that could be hazardous to our surroundings. The observance emphasizes the three tenets of the recycling program – “Reduce, Recycle, Reuse” – and it’s a chance to encourage good habits within our communities, homes, workplaces and schools.

Now in its 16th year, National Recycling Week is an established and highly regarded annual campaign that continues to educate and stimulate behavior change by promoting curbside, industrial and community recycling initiatives and giving people the tools to minimize waste and manage material resources responsibly.

Why is recycling important?

The positive impact on the environment alone makes recycling very worthwhile. To understand how much of a difference it makes, it is essential to know what recycling is. It refers to the process of collecting used materials, which are usually considered to be regular trash, and repurposing them. It also includes reuse – getting the most out of an item by using it repeatedly. Through recycling, used materials can be sorted and processed to become raw materials for the production of new products. Among the most common recycled items are plastic, glass, paper, cardboard and metal.

The recycling process involves three stages. First, old products are collected, sorted, cleaned and made ready for use. Second, manufacturers create new products from the raw material obtained from the recycling plant. Finally, the process ends when consumers purchase recycled goods, a step that’s key because it ensures success when demand of recycled products increases. That makes awareness all the more important. Consumers who realize the difference they’re making will likely buy more items that incorporate recycled materials and the practice continues to grow.

Making new items from raw, recycled materials saves a lot of energy. When you consider the resources required to harvest virgin materials and transport them to processing and production facilities, it’s easy to see the difference in energy use that recycling can make. Other factors include the energy required to clean and protect the environment from pollutant waste products, especially those that are non-biodegradable, and the resources that are used to maintain rapidly expanding landfill areas.

Recycling also impacts global climate change to a great extent. Less energy usage during industrial production helps reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Major fossil fuels used in most industries include coal, diesel, gasoline, etc. All these emit harmful gases like methane, sulfur dioxide and carbon-dioxide into the environment. The processing of fresh raw materials also creates toxic pollutants. By reducing the energy used, it minimizes the amount of fuel consumption which in turn reduces the amount of harmful pollutants in the environment.

Lower cost is another benefit of recycling. Manufacturers who produce products from virgin materials spend exorbitant amounts of money on each stage of the production cycle, starting with

the acquisition of raw materials and transferring them from their place of origin to production plants to processing and manufacturing costs. Furthermore, recycling creates employment opportunities for a lot of people. This in turn contributes to the economic development of a state, region or the entire country.

A lot of our landfill sites are approaching max capacity, and much of that is due to discarded products that could have been recycled. Some of these waste materials are non-biodegradable or will take a long time to decompose. Americans must recognize the condition of landfills, particularly near urban areas, and take a stand before it becomes a national crisis. Everything we can do to reduce, reuse and recycle now will have a big payoff in the future.

Fort Lee is committed to reaching both local and Department of Army waste reduction goals. The benchmarks for fiscal 2013 include a non-hazardous solid waste (including construction and demolition material) diversion goal of 56 percent and a municipal solid waste reduction of 46 percent. Each year until 2015, these diversion goals will increase by 2 percent. The ultimate long-range Army goal is "Net Zero" – installations that reduce, reuse and recovers waste streams, converting them to resource values with zero landfill input.

To reach the Army goals, Fort Lee Soldiers, civilians and contractors must prevent waste by generating less, recycling more and making purchase decisions that give priority to green materials or items containing recycled products. View Fort Lee Recycling Program Policy 19-03, Fort Lee Green Procurement Policy 04-11 and Fort Lee's Pollution Prevention Policy 03-11, at www.lee.army.mil/cmd.group/fort.lee.policy.letters.aspx.

The participation of each organization and individual on Fort Lee is critical to the success of the recycling program. To ensure the installation achieves Army goals, random waste reviews are performed. Results are sent to facility managers or the appropriate chain of command to facilitate compliance with recycling standards.

All organizations on Fort Lee are serviced by the installation recycling contract. The contractor provides various sizes of disposal containers for the program. They include the 96-gallon green portable containers and 7 gallon blue desk-side containers. The larger recycling bins can be requested through the recycle contractor representative at (804) 734-4798. The 7-gallon containers can be purchased by the organization or requested through the Environmental Management Office. Administrative office area containers will be used for the following:

PAPER: mixed and office bond, envelopes, folders, brown bags, magazines, catalogs, newspaper, and shredded (contained in clear plastic bags).

CARDBOARD: all boxes should be broken down and placed in a cardboard dumpster. If your facility does not have a dumpster, cardboard should still be broken down and placed by the green recycling containers.

METAL: aluminum soda cans, food cans and miscellaneous metals - rinsed.

PLASTIC: drink and food containers with No. 1 and 2 recycling labels - rinsed.

GLASS: drink and food containers and any miscellaneous glass - rinsed.

Industrial or bulk recycling unit support with roll-on/roll-off dumpsters requires a special request through the recycling contract representative (734-4798). Bulk and regular recycling also can be dropped off at the Fort Lee Recycle Center on 2nd Street, behind the Exchange and Commissary complex. In addition to the items listed earlier, the center accepts clean, unpainted scrap wood or wooden pallets and yard debris including leaves, branches and grass clippings. Yard debris must be placed in clear plastic bags.

The contractor collects recyclable products once a week from installation buildings or as needed. Special removal requests can be scheduled through the solid waste contract representative at 734-4798.

Each Fort Lee agency must designate an office or building recycling coordinator, which in most cases is the designated facility manager unless an alternate has been assigned. The responsibilities of the recycling coordinators are to ensure adequate materials and containers are available to support the program, that individuals are fully utilizing the containers, that individuals understand what can be recycled and are participating to the maximum extent possible, and to contact the Environmental Management Office if any information is needed to assist with recycling concerns.

In recognition of National Recycling Week, all coordinators should assess their building recycling program. The EMO will place Call2Recycling boxes at the following locations: Commissary, PX, Xpress Gas Station, CASCOR, DPW and Ordnance PX for rechargeable batteries and cell phones.

For further details about the recycling program, call 734-5014.